UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

ADMINISTRATIVE REGULATIONS

CHAPTER 8 - REPORTS MANAGEMENT

SECTION 1 - GENERAL

�→800. **PURPOSE.** This chapter sets forth policies, responsibilities and procedures for the management of reports within the Department.

801. **POLICY.** Management and operating officials at all levels need dependable information to measure the accomplishment of objectives, and to improve the effectiveness of programs, policies, and procedures. It is Department policy that this information shall be obtained through systematically planned and administered systems that will assure (1) adequacy, accuracy and usefulness of collected data, and (2) maximum economy in collecting and disseminating data.

802. **ROLE OF REPORTS IN MANAGEMENT.** Reports are an important means of communication in the management process. Although routinely considered a device to measure the progress of programs for which the manager is responsible and to control the activities of subordinates, they are also a primary source of information for planning and directing future programs.

803. **OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORTS MANAGEMENT PROGRAM.** The USDA reports management program is designed to help each manager carry out his responsibilities, and at the same time achieve maximum economy, uniformity, and simplicity in reporting systems. An effective reports management program should:

a. Provide management with needed information at times and places, and in the forms most useful to it.

b. Combine and simplify reports wherever possible.

c. Reduce frequency and distribution of reports to the minimum required for sound operation.

d. Eliminate non-essential reports and information.

e. Provide employees with needed direction and means for the preparation of required reports. ✻

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✳→804. DEFINITIONS. a. Report. The transmission of recorded data or information between organizations, whether form, narrative, tabular, graphic, questionnaire, punch card, tape, or other medium, regardless of the method of processing, preparation, or transmission.

b. Recurring Report. A report which requires repetitive preparation in whole or in part.

c. One-Time Report. A report prepared on special request, one-time only, by one or more activities.

d. Situation Report. A report prepared in connection with a specific event or temporary situation. A situation report might require repetitive submission during a stated period of time to satisfy the single requirement. The total submission constitutes one report.

e. USDA Report. A report required by a Departmental staff office to be submitted by other staff offices and/or agencies.

f. Agency Report. A report required by an agency to be submitted by an activity under its jurisdiction.

g. Interagency Report. A report required by one USDA agency to be submitted by another USDA agency or its activities.

h. External Report. A report required by an agency outside USDA to be submitted by the Department, or agencies of the Department.

i. Feeder Report. An optional term used to identify reports that are required for the sole purpose of providing information needed in preparing other reports.

j. Due Date. The date a report is to arrive at its prescribed destination.

k. Federal Reports Act of 1942 (57 Stat. 1078; 5 U.S.C. 139-139f). The Federal statute requiring Federal agencies to obtain the approval of the Bureau of the Budget before imposing reporting and record keeping requirements on the public, (i.e. persons, industrial organizations, State and local governments, etc.) ←✳

✳→1. Report Control Symbols (RCS). A system of code-numbering and/or lettering used to identify and catalog individual reports.

SECTION 2 - RESPONSIBILITIES

805. PROGRAM RESPONSIBILITY. The Office of Plant and Operations will:

    a. Develop and promote techniques to improve the effectiveness of reports management programs and activities throughout the Department.

    b. Provide Departmental standards and guidelines for the creation and use of reports.

    c. Advise and assist staff offices and agencies in establishing and administering effective reports management programs and systems.

    d. Direct and coordinate periodic reviews of USDA staff office and agency reports.

    e. Evaluate progress and summarize results of USDA staff office and agency reports management programs.

806. DEPARTMENTAL STAFF OFFICE RESPONSIBILITY. The head of each Departmental staff office will:

    a. Establish internal controls and procedures necessary to achieve the reports management program's objectives, including adequate systems for reviewing, clearing and controlling proposed reports.

    b. Periodically, or as requested by the Director of Plant and Operations, conduct a systematic review of USDA and external reporting requirements to determine whether any reports for which his office is responsible should be modified or discontinued.

    c. Maintain a current inventory of all reports required to be submitted by and to his office (see sample inventory format at Exhibit 1 & 2). ←✳

※→810. RESPONSIBILITY OF THE REPORTS MANAGEMENT OFFICER. Each individual designated as a reports management officer will:

a. Observe agency reports activities to assure compliance with policies enumerated in this and agency instructions to achieve the objectives of the reports management program.

b. Administer reports clearance and control-symbol procedures within his agency or office.

c. Insure that instructions for recurring reports are contained in permanent directives of the agency.

d. Identify categories of information to be exempted from reports control procedures.

e. Establish evaluation procedures necessary to improve the quality of reports.

f. Maintain liaison with Departmental staff offices and other agencies to assure maximum economy and effectiveness in his activity's reporting program.

SECTION 3 - REPORTS CONTROLS

811. REPORTS CLEARANCE PROCEDURE. Prior to clearance, each new or revised report will be reviewed for need, usefulness, and adequacy. Staff offices and agencies will establish internal clearance procedures to insure adequate coordination, and approval of each reporting requirement by a responsible official. This clearance may be accomplished separately, or as part of the review and clearance of the directive or forms associated with the report. An optional clearance form AD Form 368 Report Clearance Request, is attached at Exhibit 3, for those agencies desiring an independent reports clearance procedure. This form contains the type of information which should be considered during the initial clearance review.

812. EXEMPTED REPORTS. Certain categories of reports normally are exempt from reports management procedures. ←※

*→Examples are: Investigative and audit reports; informational copies of personnel transaction documents; annual and supplemental budget estimates, justifications, and supporting information; individual supply and procurement transactions; information presented in narrative form, such as research findings, technical summaries, special studies, projects, or surveys. Reports management officers should analyze office and agency informational requirements and identify those categories to be exempted.

813. REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOLS (RCS). a. Principles of Use. Experience has shown that the use of reports control symbols makes several important contributions to efficient reports management. Specifically, they permit quick identification of approved reports, provide a means of easy reference and inventory listing, and sometimes tie records and files to the reports they are associated with.

b. Reports Control Symbol Systems. The symbol system may be geared to the organization's directives or forms numbering system, to the organizational structure, to a subjective classification system, or to any other system that meets the organization's needs.

c. Use. A reports control symbol should be assigned to each new reporting requirement upon completion of the initial clearance procedure, and prior to issuance.

814. CENTRAL REPORTS CONTROL RECORDS. Each staff office and agency will maintain control records on all reporting requirements which it originates. The records should include:

a. A current inventory of all reports required to be submitted by and to the agency. The inventory should be maintained in such form that it can be made available or reproduced, as required, for systematic review, analysis, and appraisal of reports. (See sample inventory format at Exhibits 1 & 2).

b. A copy of each report clearance form with a copy of the directive that established the report, and any forms associated with the report.

c. A copy of the evaluation made on each report analyzed during the periodic review process. ←*

SECTION 4 - REPORTS SURVEY AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

*→815. CONTINUOUS SELF EVALUATION. Managers and operating officials at all levels shall continuously evaluate the need for individual reports received in their offices. Those that do not satisfy a valid and current requirement should be discontinued. Particular emphasis should be placed on:

  a. Utility of the information, and value received in relation to the cost of the report.

  b. Simplicity of data requirements.

  c. Frequency and number of respondents required to submit the report.

816. PERIODIC SURVEYS AND REVIEWS. Periodically, or upon specific request from the Director of Plant and Operations, the head of each staff office and the administrator of each agency will conduct a comprehensive review of all recurring reports required to be submitted by or to his activity. During this review operating officials should be asked to reaffirm the continued need for each report submitted to their offices and to suggest specific improvements in those that are required.

817. RECOMMENDING IMPROVEMENTS. Agencies and staff offices are urged to evaluate carefully all reports which they are required to submit and the directives prescribing them, and to recommend improvement, simplification or discontinuance, where appropriate. Individual recommendations should be submitted as they are developed. Recommendations resulting from periodic surveys should be prepared individually and submitted in a group identified with the survey. Recommendations should be submitted to the responsible departmental staff office or, in the case of inter-agency reports to the responsible agency. Each recommendation should include, but is not limited to:

  a. A copy of the report and a citation of the directive prescribing the report.

  b. An estimate of the number of man-hours consumed in preparing the report throughout the agency, including→*

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✳→feeder reports when pertinent.

c. A statement of the recommended change, and the reasons
for the change. This statement should be as specific as
possible and offer constructive criticism for improving the
quality of the report, or give valid reasons for discontinuing
it.

818. REPORTS EVALUATION CHECKLIST. AD Form 367,
Reports Evaluation Checklist, (Exhibit 4) will help identify weak-
nesses and develop recommendations for improving individual
reports. The evaluation checklist and the reports clearance
form (or their equivalents) should be used during the periodic
survey of reports required by the agency as a means of assuring
adequate appraisal. ←✳

INVENTORY OF REPORTS REQUIRED

(Staff Office or Agency)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Reports Control Symbol	Required By	Title of Report	Purpose and Description	Prepared By	Other Distri- bution	Frequency Due In	Authorizing Directive
List each report only once			1. Specific program which the report supports. De- scribe the type of data included in the report. 2. If report is a Feeder Report, identify Agency requiring the report and the report title and RCS (if different).		Show Distri- bution of all copies received	D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly Q - Quarterly A - Annually Use prefix "semi" when report is required twice weekly, twice monthly, twice annually, etc. Use prefix "bi" when report is required every 2 weeks, 2 months, 2 years, etc.	

Group reports by:
  a. Organizational unit establishing initial requirement.
  b. Program area which the report supports.

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EXHIBIT 1 - 4 AR 806c, 807e and 814a

INVENTORY OF RECURRING REPORTS SUBMITTED

_____

(Staff Office or Agency)

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Reports Control Symbol	Prepared By	Title of Report	Purpose and Description	Submitted To	Other Internal Distri- bution	Frequency Due Out	Authorizing Directive
List each report only once			1. Identify specific program which the report supports. Describe type of data included in the report.			D - Daily W - Weekly M - Monthly Q - Quarterly A - Annually	
			2. If the report is a Feeder Report, identify agency requiring the re- port, the report title, and RCS (if different).			Use of prefix "Semi" when report is submitted twice a week, month, year, etc.	
						Use prefix "bi" when report is submitted every 2 weeks, months, years, etc.	
			Group reports by: a. Organizational unit preparing the report or b. Program area which the report supports				

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EXHIBIT 2 - 4 AR 806c, 807e and 814a

EXHIBIT 3 - 4 AR 811

AD-368 (7-63)	REPORT CLEARANCE REQUEST *(See Instructions on reverse)*	1. REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL *(Inserted by Reports Mgmt. Officer)*

1. EXACT TITLE OF REPORT *(Attach copy of prescribed form or reporting format)*

2. OFFICE REQUIRING REPORT

4. PURPOSE OF REPORT

5. REPORT IS *(New or revised)*	6. REPORTING FREQUENCY *(Specify)* ONE TIME _____ RECURRING _____	7. DUE DATE

8. DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHING REPORT *(Attach copy)*

9. OFFICES PREPARING REPORTS *(Show numbers and kinds of preparing offices)*

10. DISTRIBUTION OF REPORT COPIES *(Specify each recipient office)*

11. IDENTIFY PRESCRIBED SOURCE DATA FORM(S) OR FORMAT(S) *(Attach copy)*

12. IS COMPUTER EQUIPMENT USED IN
☐ PREPARING REPORTS ☐ ANALYZING REPORTS ☐ NOT USED

13. LIST REPORTS SUPERSEDED BY THIS REPORT

14. REPORT REQUESTED BY *(Signature)*	14A. TITLE
15. REPORT APPROVED BY *(Signature)*	15A. TITLE

PERIODIC REVIEWS

16.

17. REMARKS

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EXHIBIT 3 - 4 AR 811 (Page 2)

AD-368 (Reverse)
(7-63)

REPORT CLEARANCE REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS

A. Use Form AD-368 to get approval for each new or revised agency or staff office reporting requirement.

B. Submit an original and one copy of the form to reports management office.

C. Follow the instructions below when preparing request.

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1. Leave Blank.

2. Indicate title of report.

3. Identify office requiring report.

4. Indicate the program which the report supports and why the report is needed.

5. Self Explanatory. *Indicate whether report is new or revised·*

6. Check appropriate entry. If recurring, specify frequency. Use: Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Quarterly, Annually, etc.

7. Self Explanatory.

8. Recurring reports requirements should be stated in standard directives of office or agency. Temporary instructions should be codified at earliest possible date. One time reports are usually established by letter, TWX etc.

9. Be specific by office or type of office to prepare report. Include number of offices. E.G., "all state offices," "300 county offices," etc.

10. Self-explanatory.

11. Consider how preparing offices will collect and file data. Provide work sheets on source forms for this purpose. This reduces cost of report and insures that you get what you want.

12. The reference here is to electromechanical tabulating card machines and to electronic data processing machines.

13. Identify by Title or Reports Control symbol or both.

14. Self Explanatory.

15. Self Explanatory.

16. Include date and signature of Reports Management Officer.

17. The "Remarks" space is for the use of the Reports Management Officer.

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EXHIBIT 4 - 4 AR 818

AD-367 (7-63)	REPORTS EVALUATION CHECKLIST	REVIEW DATE
REPORT TITLE		

SECTION 1—DETERMINE THE NEED

INSTRUCTIONS: Check either column (b) or (c). If questionable, show changes in column (d) (a)	QUESTION-ABLE (b)	SATISFAC-TORY (c)	PROPOSED CHANGES (Attach Additional Sheets, if Needed) (d)
1. THE REPORT AS A WHOLE Who uses it? How? What is its purpose? Should it be continued?			
2. USE OF EACH ITEM. Is every item used? Any missing items to be added?			
3. USE OF EACH COPY. Are all copies used to good advantage?			
4. FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP. Is the information within the scope of the office functions?			
5. MISAPPLICATION. Does the report try to solve a problem which should be solved by other means?			
6. STAND-BY DATA. Is the data obtained for "just-in-case" use?			
7. ANOTHER AVAILABLE SOURCE. Is the data available in another report or office?			
8. BY PRODUCT. Is it possible to get the data by some other process?			
9. DIRECT USE OF RECORDS. Could actual records or "last copy" of record be used instead of a report?			
10. SAMPLING. Would a sampling of a few offices give reliable data?			
11. EXCEPTION REPORTING. Would it be appropriate to report conditions only when other than normal?			
12. COMBINATION. Could this report be combined with another report?			
13. NON-RELATED MATERIAL. Are non-related subjects included in the same report?			
14. ADEQUACY AND SUITABILITY. Is scope or content tailored to meet needs?			
15. VALUE VS. COST. Is the report worth its cost?			

SECTION 2—VERIFY THE TIMING

16. REPORTING PERIODS. Are reporting periods properly stated?			
17. FREQUENCY. Is the present frequency suitable, excessive, or inadequate?			
18. DUE DATE. Is the due date specifically stated?			
19. PREPARING OFFICE WORKLOAD. Has this been considered? Can due dates be changed to avoid peak workloads?			

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· EXHIBIT 4 - 4 AR 818 (Page 2)

AO-367 (7-63)	REPORTS EVALUATION CHECKLIST (Page 2)	REVIEW DATE
REPORT TITLE		

SECTION 3 -- REVIEW STYLE OF PRESENTATION

INSTRUCTIONS: Check either column (b) or (c). If questionable, show changes in column (d). (a)	QUESTION-ABLE (b)	SATISFAC-TORY (c)	PROPOSED CHANGES (Attach Additional Sheets, if Needed) (d)
20. REPORT TITLE. Is it the same as, or listed in the directive?			
21. PURPOSE OF REPORT. Is it clearly stated?			
22. REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS. Are reporting instructions clear and adequate?			
23. INTEGRATED REPORTING. Are data needs of other levels tied in?			
24. FEEDER REPORTS. Are procedures for feeder reports provided to assure uniformity and simplicity?			
25. REPORTING UNITS. Are reporting units shown? Are there too many, too few?			
26. NEGATIVE REPORTS. Are negative reports required? What use is made of them?			
27. NUMBER OF COPIES. Are number of copies specified?			
28. ROUTING. Are correct mailing addresses given?			
29. NARRATIVE OR FORM Is the best format for this report used?			
30. ARRANGEMENT AND SIZE. Are items sequenced to source? Is spacing adequate? Are item captions clear? Is size adequate & practical?			
31. STANDARDIZATION. Do all offices use the same form or format?			
32. SUMMARY INFORMATION. Would a summary of information rather than statistics or a narrative be better?			
33. CUMULATIVE DATA. Can data be maintained on a cumulative basis to eliminate last-minute workloads?			
34. COMPARISONS. Are comparisons made against goals, past performance, or current performance of others?			
35. GRAPHICS Are graphics used to good advantage?			
36. AUTHENTICATION. Are verifying or approving officials' signatures used only when necessary?			
37. DATA SOURCES. Are records from which reports are to be prepared identified?			
38. ARRANGEMENT OF RECORDS. Should records be rearranged to simplify reporting?			
39. REPORT SYMBOL. Is it shown after title of report?			
40. STYLE OF PRESENTATION Does the overall report provide clarity and simplicity?			